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# Gardner-Webb Awards Over 200 Degrees During Commencement Exercises Dec. 14

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Office of University  
Communications

December 14, 2019

## *Traditional Undergraduate, Degree Completion, and Graduate Programs Students Honored*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University hosted Fall Commencement on Saturday, Dec. 14, in the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center. More than 200 graduates were honored during the ceremony.

The ceremony featured graduates of Gardner-Webb's traditional undergraduate program, GOAL—The Degree Completion Program (DCP), and graduate programs. Ricky Edwin Alston Jr., (Durham, N.C.) who received a Master of Divinity in pastoral ministries, offered the invocation. Elizabeth Schroeder, (Chapel Hill, N.C.) who earned a Master of Science in Nursing, provided the scripture reading.

The GOAL—DCP Academic Award was presented to Romelle Frazee Blanton (Shelby, N.C.), who received a Bachelor of Science Degree in human services. The Senior Scholastic Achievement Award was given to Brian William Stepanek (Mooresville, N.C.), who earned a Bachelor of Science in computer science.

Gardner-Webb University bestowed its highest recognition of merit, the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, to John J. Godbold Jr. during the ceremony. A distinguished business entrepreneur from Rock Hill, S.C., Godbold and his wife gave a multi-million dollar gift to Gardner-Webb in 2008 to establish the Godbold School of Business and a



Rev. Dr. Lamont Littlejohn, who has three degrees from Gardner-Webb University, speaks during Fall Commencement on Dec. 14.

pledge of annual support. In addition to funding enhancements for the school and development opportunities for the faculty, the donation provided four student scholarships presented annually to business majors.

The Rev. Dr. M. Lamont Littlejohn Jr., a 2016 alumnus of Gardner-Webb, gave the commencement message, entitled “You are the Light of the World.” He is the servant pastor/teacher at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Shelby, N.C. A native of Kings Mountain, N.C., Littlejohn received his bachelor’s degree, Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Gardner-Webb.

He shared an experience from his trip to the Holy Land with the GWU School of Divinity. At the Mount of Beatitudes, Dr. Robert Canoy, divinity school dean, began to explain the details of the landscape and read passages from the “Sermon on the Mount” in the Gospel of Matthew.

“The passage that caught my attention and remains vivid in my memory was the part about the ‘Light of the world,’” Littlejohn told the graduates. “I can recall Dr. Canoy referencing the city of Tiberias, located east of the Mount of Beatitudes, by saying: ‘You see that place over there, that is the city of Tiberias. At night, Tiberias would be lit by lamps burning throughout the city. Because of the thick darkness, that city could be seen for miles away. When Jesus said, ‘You are the light of the world,’ it was as though Jesus turned his attention from the city and placed it upon the people. {You} are the light of the world, not that city, but you.’”

Then, Littlejohn issued a challenge to the graduates. “Your responsibility as light is to remain lit by staying close in a right relationship with God who is the source of the light,” he stated. “There will be good and difficult days in front of you, but never allow anything to hide your light. You be the difference, you be the change, you be the servant, you be the compassion, you be the example that causes someone to turn toward the Son. No worries, because the Son never goes out because he is Immanuel, ‘God with us.’”

*Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.*